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ABSTRACT

Sex and ethnic differences in the use of social power were investigated using role theoretical and attributional perspectives. Performance and self-attribution processes of power usage were related to ascribed versus achieved role characteristics. One hundred and sixty subjects, equal numbers of Chicano and Anglo males and females, participated as managers in an industrial simulation study. The subjects were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions defined by power versus no-power, and male versus female workers. It was hypothesized that Anglo males, in contrast to females and Chicanos, would make internal attributions for successful performance, experience less discomfort as powerholders, and attempt to influence subordinates to a greater degree. Overall, the data obtained from the Anglo males and Anglo females supported the hypotheses, while that from the Chicano groups did not. The most pronounced effects emerged on the ethnic variable, largely due to the behavior of Chicanas. In contrast to the Anglo females, the Chicanas' behavior was very similar to that of the Anglo males. Chicanas performed well in the powerholder role and did not experience the role discomfort of Anglo females. (Author)

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Sex and Ethnic Differences in Use of Power

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Sex and Ethnic Differences in Use of Power

Role theorists (e.g., Sarbin & Allen, 1968) state that social identity is a result of role enactments. One's identity results from interactions with the occupants of complementary statuses, and the valuations given by relevant others for one's role conduct. Central to the three-dimensional model of social identity provided by Sarbin et al. is the continuum of achieved and ascribed roles. Status is conceived of as a position along the ascribed-achieved continuum. It is a location in the social structure defined by expectations for performance by an incumbant. Characteristics such as sex and race determine one's ascribed status. It is suggested that the social identity of women and minorities is defined predominantly in terms of their ascribed roles, whereas achieved roles define that of the Anglo male. This definition is often implied in such phrases as "female lawyer," "black doctor," and "Chicano professor."

Social power may be defined as the ability to influence another individual, typically another's behavior, values, attitudes, etc. Clearly this is an area well-suited to study in terms of attributional processes. Under what circumstances do I make a self-attribution of successful influence? Under what circumstances do others attribute power to me?

Research has indicated that females tend to make and be perceived in terms of external attributions (e.g., ease of task), while males make and are perceived in terms of internal attributions (e.g., ability).

Consistent with the above model of social identity, Ayers-Nachamkin and Cann (Note 1) have proposed a role theoretical explanation of the differential patterns of attributions for own performance observed for

males and females. Such a role perspective raises some intriguing questions regarding the use of power -- ascribed role characteristics may well be of major significance in attributions of social power.

Virtually no research has been conducted examining the effect(s) of ascribed role characteristics on social power. Questions concerning use of power in formal, achieved positions by women and minorities have simply not been addressed. Furthermore, psychological research on social power has dealt almost exclusively with the effects of power on recipients of the powerholder's influence. Such emphasis on the influencee is evidenced in studies concerned with compliance, liking versus disliking of the more powerful, respect for the more powerful, etc. (e.g., French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965; Schopler, 1965; Zander & Curtis, 1962). In short, the study of power has been predominantly from the perspective of the influencee or recipient.

Kipnis and co-workers, however, have conducted research concerned with how control of power affects the powerholder's self-perception, perception of the less powerful, and choice of mode of influence (e.g., Goodstadt and Kipnis, 1970; Kipnis and Lane, 1962; Kipnis & Cosentino, 1969; Kipnis and Vanderveer, 1971; Kipnis, 1972). Most pertinent of his results for the present research are those regarding self-evaluation by the powerholder and evaluation of the less powerful. In the 1972 study, Kipnis reported that control of power led subjects to: 1) devalue the worth of subordinate's performance; 2) attribute cause of subordinate's efforts to their power, rather than subordinate's motivation to do well; and 3) view subordinates as objects of manipulation. He, furthermore, reported that control and power led to increased attempts to influence the behavior of subordinates.

Lacking in the above research is any examination of the use and experience of power by other than Anglo males. Whereas there is no research concerning use of power by minorities, there is evidence of sex differences in this area provided by Johnson's (1974) study on sex role stereotyping and social power. Johnson found that people expect different types of power to be used by females and males, and these expectations are consistent with sex role stereotypes. For example, she found that expert power (influence by means of superior knowledge, skills, and trustworthiness) is viewed as more typical of men than women, while helplessness (influence by means of claimed dependency) is viewed as more typical of women than men. In general, it was found that indirect power is the primary mode of influence associated with women. As Johnson states, "stereotypes indicate that women are supposed to act as if they are not using power when in fact they are: women are expected to be less direct than men and more sneaky" (Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble and Zellman, 1978). The implications of indirect power for women include such facets of how the powerholder views herself, how others view her, and the positions of power (or powerlessness) in which she often is placed. For example, indirect power: 1) may render immediate success but provides no basis for future influence; 2) does not allow recognition for influence in a given situation; and 3) is not likely to enhance feelings of self-confidence. Johnson's research strongly suggests a differential attributional process for social power dependent upon ascribed role characteristics.

The present research is an examination of the use of power by not only Anglo males, but females and a minority, Chicanos. It was hypothesized that:

1) Females and Chicanos would make external attributions for successful performance as a powerholder and that Anglo males would make internal attributions as reported by Kipnis;

2) Females and Chicanos would experience greater discomfort than Anglo males in the role of powerholder; furthermore such discomfort would be enhanced when dealing with subordinates of the opposite sex;

3) Females and Chicanos would attempt to influence their subordinates to a lesser degree than Anglo males.

Method

A 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design was utilized, "power" versus "no power," male versus female, as well as sex and ethnicity: male versus female and Anglo versus Chicano subjects. Eighty female and eighty male students enrolled in introductory classes in the behavioral sciences participated in the study. Half of each of these groups was Chicano, half was Anglo.

The basic experimental set-up is the one used by Kipnis and others, in which subjects were recruited to participate as managers in an industrial simulation study. Upon arriving for the experiment, the subject was informed that s/he would be supervising four other students who are workers. The workers were described as being located elsewhere. The separation of workers and supervisor was explained in terms of eliminating such factors as difference in personality, appearance, etc., which could potentially interfere with the simulation of the business. All workers were identified as either female or male to the manager. The subjects were further told that their job was to operate the company at a profitable level by maintaining worker efficiency. The managers were told they would receive $2.00

for their work as manager, whereas workers receive a base pay of $1.00.

The task was explained in the following manner. The company sells two products: coded letters (digit-symbol substitution) and crossed-out letters. All workers begin on the coding task. The alternative crossing-out task is more boring and makes less money for the company. Every three minutes (for six trials) worker output is brought to the supervisor. Actually, the workers were nonexistent, and their output was preprogrammed, such that output substantially exceeded the minimum required for company profit. Thus every manager was operating successfully.

There are two experimental conditions, "power" versus "no-power." Male and female subjects were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions. In the power condition, subjects were told that they may threaten/promise or actually do any of the following: 1) transfer worker to alternative task; 2) deduct 10¢ per trial from worker's pay; 3) give worker 10¢ per trial pay raise; or 4) fire the worker. Also, they could give the worker additional instructions. A poster listing the options was placed in front of the subject. For the no-power condition, the above power provisions were omitted. I should note "no-power" is used to indicate that the subjects were to rely on legitimate power as appointed manager and their own personal powers of persuasion.

A one-way communication device was used to allow the manager to speak with each worker. Subjects were told that workers could send notes along with their output. The only communication was work trial 3 when worker 3 asked if he could smoke.

Before actually beginning the task, all subjects completed a brief questionnaire indicating on 11-point scales how successful they expected

to be, how pleasant, easy, and comfortable they expected being manager would be, and how good they expected workers' performance would be. They were also asked to describe on four scales how they were feeling at the present time: elated-depressed, bored-excited, happy-sad, confident-not-at-all confident.

Following the managerial task, all subjects completed a second questionnaire for their own performance and the performance of their workers on 11-point scales. In addition, each subject also rated his/her behavior as manager on 14 semantic differential scales and again rated their mood.

Results

Time limitations do not permit a full report of the results. Major findings based upon the self-report data will be presented. The behavioral data based upon communication to workers, which is most pertinent to the third hypothesis, will not be reported in the present paper.

Throughout the analyses the most pronounced and perhaps the most interesting differences emerged regarding the ethnic variable. Support for the hypotheses was consistently found in the Anglo group, while, not only did the data for the Chicano group not support the hypotheses, in several instances the results obtained were in the opposite direction.

Differences in the data obtained from Anglo females and Chicanas appear to be the determining factor in accounting for these results. The data were initially analyzed utilizing a series of 4-way ANOVAs.

With regard to pre-test data, Chicanos expected to find performing as manager more pleasant, $F(1,144) = 5.57$, $p < .02$, and they expected to be more comfortable in the role than did Anglos, $F(1,144) = 7.77$, $p < .006$. Chicanos also expected their workers to perform far better than did Anglo

subjects, $F(1,144) = 18.52$, $p < .001$.

The Chicano subjects were not only more optimistic about their expected performance as manager, on the pre-test measures of mood, they indicated feeling more elated, $F(1,144) = 13.39$, $p < .001$, more excited, $F(1,144) = 23.81$, $p < .001$, and happier, $F(1,144) = 16.21$, $p < .001$. There were strong interactions between sex of the subject and ethnicity in terms of reported happiness, $F(1,144) = 19.25$, $p < .001$, and reported excitedness, $F(1,144) = 5.75$, $p < .02$. In both instances this interaction was primarily due to the extreme differences between the female subjects -- the Chicanas reporting themselves happier and more excited than any other group, and the female Anglos reporting themselves least happy and excited. This decided difference between the female subjects becomes a very familiar pattern.

Finally, when asked how confident they were feeling prior to beginning the task, as expected, overall males reported themselves more confident than females, $F(1,144) = 4.07$, $p < .05$.

With regard to post-test data, again the Chicanos reported having found the managerial role more pleasant, $F(1,144) = 15.87$, $p < .001$, more comfortable, $F(1,144) = 10.87$, $p < .01$, and they described their workers' performance as better, $F(1,144) = 5.71$, $p < .02$, than did the Anglo subjects.

These variables produced several interesting interactions. Subjects found the managerial task much more pleasant when they had like-sex workers, $F(1,144) = 4.48$, $p < .04$, i.e., when a male manager had male workers and a female manager had female workers. As expected, female subjects described themselves as more comfortable with the managerial task when they had been in the no-power condition, while male subjects felt more comfortable in the power condition, $F(1,144) = 4.29$, $p < .04$. There was an interaction between

power and ethnicity in terms of subjects' evaluations of their workers' performance. Anglo subjects in power conditions devalued their workers' performance. Chicano subjects, on the other hand, devalued their workers' performance when they had been in the no-power condition, $F(1,144) = 10.85$, $p < .001$.

The post-test reports of mood echo those of the pre-test. Chicanos again reported themselves as more elated, $F(1,144) = 12.89$, $p < .001$, more excited, $F(1,144) = 18.76$, $p < .001$, happier, $F(1,144) = 15.44$, $p < .001$, and this time also more confident, $F(1,144) = 11.55$, $p < .001$ than Anglo subjects.

Again in terms of happiness, $F(1,144) = 9.16$, $p < .003$, and level of excitement, $F(1,144) = 9.51$, $p < .002$, we find the sex of subject x ethnicity interaction due to the extreme differences between the females. The Chicanas report the highest levels in terms of these measures, while the female Anglos report the lowest levels.

The same pattern of differences between female subjects showed up in terms of confidence ratings. Chicanas showed the highest level of confidence, while female Anglos reported the lowest, $F(1,144) = 6.60$, $p < .01$.

Regarding the attributions concerning the managers' own performance, two significant ethnic differences were found. The Chicanos said they worked harder, $F(1,144) = 11.40$, $p < .001$, an internal attribution, and found the task easier than the Anglos, $F(1,144) = 5.53$, $p < .02$. No such differences were found for the other two possible explanations of performance: "own managerial skill and ability" and "luck in getting good workers." The now familiar ethnic x sex of subject interaction was found for "own hard work as manager": Chicanas assigned a significantly higher level

of effort to themselves than did either male group, while Anglo females assigned themselves the lowest level of effort, $F(1,144) = 3.89$, $p < .05$.

A three-way interaction emerged regarding task difficulty, $F(1,144) = 4.29$, $p < .04$. Though overall the Chicanos found the task easier, both ethnic groups described the task as more difficult when they had been in a cross-sex situation, i.e., managing opposite sex workers.

The ethnic differences become even more compelling when one looks at the self-attributions of the two populations separately. We had predicted that males would make higher internal attributions for their performance than would females. The Anglo data supported that hypothesis to the extent the males described themselves as having worked significantly harder than females, $F(1,72) = 4.72$, $p < .03$, and there was a marginally significant trend, $F(1,144) = 3.46$, $p < .07$, toward males attributing more managerial skill and ability to themselves than did females. The really puzzling data, however, are in the Chicano population. Not only were there no significant sex differences in the kinds of self-attributions made to explain performance, the cell means for females and males are virtually identical.

Asked how likely it was that they'd want to act as manager again for a similar task, Chicanos were highly positive, $F(1,144) = 26.49$, $p < .001$. Once again there was a significant ethnicity x sex of subject interaction with Chicanas exhibiting the highest degree of willingness and Anglo females assigning the lowest degree of willingness, $F(1,144) = 4.46$, $p < .04$, the cell means for male subjects falling between these two extremes. A significant interaction between power condition and sex of the worker emerged on this variable for the Anglo group. Both male and female subjects said

they would rather be a manager again given that they had had power and male workers, or no-power and female workers, $F(1,72) = 5.00$, $p < .03$.

Analysis of the description of behavior as manager on the semantic differential scales yielded the following ethnic differences. Chicanos rated their behavior as manager stronger, $F(1,144) = 7.13$, $p < .001$, friendlier, $F(1,144) = 4.78$, $p < .03$, more powerful, $F(1,144) = 4.94$, $p < .03$, and trustworthy, $F(1,144) = 4.19$, $p < .04$.

Interestingly, there was a significant ethnic x sex of subject interaction on the masculine-feminine scale. Chicanas rated themselves as far more feminine than female Anglos, and Chicano males rated themselves as more masculine than Anglo males, $F(1,144) = 8.75$, $p < .004$. What makes this finding particularly intriguing is that analyses of the two populations separately revealed only one sex difference between the Chicanos' ratings (other than the obvious masculine-feminine dimension). The Chicano males rated their behavior as more competitive than the females, $F(1,72) = 4.33$, $p < .04$. On the other hand, the Anglo males described their behavior as manager as stronger, $F(1,72) = 4.86$, $p < .03$, more effective, $F(1,72) = 6.54$, $p < .01$, more powerful, $F(1,72) = 6.96$, $p < .01$, and more active $F(1,72) = 6.56$, $p < .01$, than the females. The accumulation of results begin to suggest that for whatever reasons, sex role expectations do not appear to be salient for Chicanas in this particular situation.

Turning to the attributional data regarding the workers' performance, it is once again the ethnic and sex variables which are most prominent in the 4-way ANOVA. Due to the high intercorrelation, ratings were averaged over the four workers for each subject. Chicanos felt that the following factors, internal attributions, contributed more to their workers' performance

than Anglos: the workers' ability $F(1,144) = 10.83$, $p < .001$, their own orders and instructions, $F(1,144) = 4.75$, $p < .03$, their own ability to keep the workers satisfied with the job, $F(1,144) = 12.82$, $p < .001$, and the workers' motivation to do well on the job, $F(1,144) = 9.86$, $p < .002$.

Conversely, Anglos attributed more explanatory weight to task difficulty, external attribution, than Chicanos, $F(1,144) = 4.18$, $p < .03$, and this was especially true if the workers were female. Attribution of workers' performance to the difficulty of the workers' job produced an interaction between ethnicity and sex of the worker, $F(1,144) = 8.95$, $p < .003$. Chicanos felt task difficulty explained more about performance if their workers were male. Anglos felt it explained more when their workers were female.

The interaction between ethnicity and sex of the worker reappeared in terms of the workers' desire to obtain pay. The Anglo subjects saw women workers as more desirous of obtaining pay than men workers, while the Chicano subjects saw male workers as more desirous of pay, $F(1,144) = 4.26$, $p < .04$. Apparently Anglos believe external circumstances have more to do with female workers' successful performances than they do with male workers' successful performances while Chicanos believe just the opposite.

Asked how likely they would be to rehire a worker, Anglos in the power condition were least likely to rehire, while Chicanos in the power condition were most likely to rehire, $F(1,144) = 3.81$, $p < .05$. Similarly, asked about the likelihood of promoting a worker, Chicanos with power were most likely to promote the worker while Anglos with power were less likely to do so. Examining the ethnic populations separately, it is found that almost no significant differences arise within the Chicano group in terms of attributions regarding workers. In marked contrast, the Anglo population

provides repeated support for the notion that subjects in the power condition devalue their workers. Interacting with that finding, however, are the effects of both sex of the subject and sex of the worker. Time limitations permit only a glimpse at those findings. A 3-way interaction emerged regarding "worker's desire to obtain pay," $F(1,72) = 4.69$, $p < .03$. Female subjects with power saw male workers as more desirous of pay. When female subjects had no power, they saw the male workers as more desirous of pay. The opposite effect was obtained for male subjects. In the power condition, they saw female subjects as more desirous of pay, while in the no-power condition they saw male subjects as more desirous of pay. Our subjects seem to be saying that if they must rely on legitimate and/or referent power, they would prefer the situation in which they have like-sex workers.

Summary and Discussion

The findings related to the Anglo males and females are consistent with the hypotheses and with previously mentioned research by Kipnis (1972) and Johnson (1974). Anglo females were less comfortable in the power condition, while Anglo males were less comfortable in the no-power condition. The task was experienced as more difficult with cross-sex workers. Anglo males as compared to Anglo females tended to make internal attributions for their success as manager, particularly in the power condition. Furthermore, there was the devaluation of workers by Anglo males, particularly in the power condition. Kipnis suggests that power does corrupt and maintained that "subjects with power viewed their workers as being controlled by the subject's power, that is, the subject's control of pay raises. The subjects with no power viewed their workers as free agents,

whose efforts originated in the worker's own motivation to achieve." (Kipnis, 1972, p. 39) The results of the present study for Anglo males certainly appear consistent with the view of Kipnis.

When we turn to the Chicano findings, there is a very different pattern of results. Contrary to our predictions, Chicanos -- both male and female -- tended to respond in much the same manner as the Anglo males. If anything, the Chicanas were more similar to the Anglo males than the Chicanos. For example, Chicanas were happier and more excited than the Chicanos at the prospect of acting as manager and remained so after their experience. Also, the Chicanas reported greater confidence than Chicanos after acting as manager. Clearly, it was the responses of the Chicanas which primarily produced the pattern of ethnic differences in the study.

The Chicana findings are indeed most intriguing! From a sex role perspective, perhaps sex role expectations are not salient in the role of powerholder for the Chicana in the same manner as for the Anglo female. Or perhaps the sex role expectations for the Chicana are different from those of the Anglo female. The Chicana appears not only able to perform well in the powerholder role, but to not experience the role discomfort found for the Anglo female. This is certainly an area for further investigation. At the University from which the Chicana sample was drawn, a large number of such students are first to attend college. Also, we have a case of a "minority" being a "majority" at this university since most students are Spanish-surnamed. Most come from a situation in which their mothers worked. It is suggested that these factors combine to produce something of a new wave Chicana -- factors which should be examined in order to better understand both social power and role expectations associated with the minority

women.

Women and minorities are striving toward, and are achieving formal positions of power. A better understanding of their behavior in such positions will serve to expand our knowledge not only of these groups, but also social power usage.

Reference Notes

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